

Church History Department Releases Book of Mormon Printer's Manuscript in New Book

4 AUGUST 2015

SALT LAKE CITY — A new volume of [“The Joseph Smith Papers Project”](#) featuring the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon was released Tuesday by the Church Historian's Press, an imprint of the [History Department](#) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “Revelations and Translations, Volume 3: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon” is the 11th published volume of the project in the Church's ongoing effort to make every document produced by Church founder [Joseph Smith](#) or by his scribes available to the public.

“We're pleased that this document will now be available for scholars and members of the Church to review and study as they desire,” said Elder Steven E. Snow of the Quorum of the Seventy during a news conference in the Church History Library. “The nice thing about this volume as well as all volumes of the Joseph Smith Papers project [is that] eventually these will all be online and will be free to the public.” Elder Snow also serves as the Church historian and recorder and executive director of the Church History Department.

“This is truly an exceptional contribution to the study, research and understanding of Latter-day Saint history and culture,” said Robin Linkhart, president of the Seventy of the Community of Christ, during the media event. “The magnificent two-volume resource represents decades of research with the printer's manuscript.”

The volume is published in two parts, each a full-color, oversized book that showcases each page of the historic manuscript with a high-resolution photograph and color-coded transcript. In addition to the photographs and transcripts of the manuscript, the volume also contains a list of scribes and printers involved in its creation and the printing of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon.

“High-quality, full-color images of the most complete early manuscript of the Book of Mormon give users of this volume unprecedented access, as though they were holding the original in their hands,” said assistant Church historian and recorder Richard E. Turley Jr.

Publication of the volume represents a major milestone in a longstanding collaboration between historians from the Church History Department and the Community of Christ (formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

Collaborating to Publish the Printer's Manuscript



[\(A downloadable, 1080p version of this video is available here for journalists\).](#)

"We're very pleased that they've been partners with us in this process and exceptionally good stewards of this priceless document," said Elder Snow. "It's great to be able to cooperate like we have and to be able to print this particular volume. I think members of both churches will find this very, very interesting." The Church has assisted in the conservation of the document.

"Well, I think it's really quite remarkable," said Ronald E. Romig of the Community of Christ, who is director of the Kirtland Temple Visitors' Center. "I'm remembering when there were times that there wasn't as much collaboration as there is today, and that's been very refreshing and I'm very thankful that that's the case."

Romig added, "We're very appreciative of the scholars and the staff who have worked on the Joseph Smith Papers Project. Not only do I consider them to be close colleagues and friends in many cases, but ... I've come to really value their contribution to helping preserve and make not only this particular manuscript but many of the sacred documents and scriptural materials of the restoration movement available to people who are sometimes just not going to ever see them if they weren't scholars."

Mormons regard the [Book of Mormon](#) as scripture and a companion to the Bible for study, believing it contains a record of ancient American civilizations and is another testament of Jesus Christ.

The Story of the Book of Mormon Printer's Manuscript



(A downloadable, 1080p version of this video is available [here for journalists](#)).

From early April to late June 1829, Joseph Smith dictated the existing text of the Book of Mormon from an ancient record. This first manuscript he and his scribes created is known as the original manuscript, and its publication will follow in a future volume of the Joseph Smith Papers. Less than 30 percent of the original manuscript has survived because of significant water damage suffered in the 19th century. Most of that manuscript is held by the [Church History Library](#) in Salt Lake City.

After the original manuscript was completed and Joseph Smith had secured the services of a printer, Smith directed that a second copy of the text be created, known as the printer's manuscript. The creation of the printer's manuscript allowed the original manuscript to be kept safe while the second copy was taken to the Palmyra, New York, [print shop of E. B. Grandin](#), where it was used to set type for the first edition of the Book of Mormon.

The printer's manuscript was eventually obtained by the Community of Christ, which is headquartered in Independence, Missouri. The Community of Christ has preserved it for more than 100 years and granted permission for it to be featured in this volume. The printer's manuscript is virtually complete, as only three lines of the original text are missing.

The Two Book of Mormon Manuscripts



[\(A downloadable, 1080p version of this video is available here for journalists\).](#)

An accompanying article on the history of the Book of Mormon translation will appear in the October 2015 issue of the Church's Ensign magazine, and [is now available online](#). Both the introduction to the new volume and the magazine article discuss the instruments Joseph Smith used to translate, and both include never-before-seen photographs of a seer stone Joseph Smith likely used in the translation of the Book of Mormon.

The stone he used in the translation was often referred to as a chocolate-colored stone with an oval shape. The stone was passed from Joseph Smith to scribe Oliver Cowdery and then from Cowdery's widow, Elizabeth Whitmer Cowdery, to Phineas Young. Young then passed it on to his brother, Brigham Young, the second president of the Church. After President Young died, one of his wives, Zina D. H. Young, donated it to the Church. In addition to this seer stone, historical records indicate that Joseph Smith owned other seer stones during his lifetime.

The entire project has been endorsed by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission ([NHPRC](#)), a division of the National Archives. The Joseph Smith Papers volumes undergo extensive peer reviews, from both Church and outside scholars.

The print edition of the Joseph Smith Papers is expected to span more than 20 volumes when complete. It is divided into six series: Journals, Revelations and Translations, Histories, Documents, Administrative Records, and Legal and Business

Case 2:19-cv-00554-RJS Document 59-3 Filed 11/17/20 PageID.725 Page 5 of 5
translations, histories, documents, administrative records, and legal and business
Records. The first volume of the project was published in 2008. For more information,
visit josephsmithpapers.org.

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